

Public Health Department

ANNUAL REPORT

ON THE HEALTH OF THE

Skelmersdale Urban District

DURING THE YEAR

1950

BY

J. GORDON HAILWOOD, M.D., Ch.B., M.R.C.S.,
L.R.C.P., D.P.H.

Medical Officer of Health.

WIGAN:
E. SIDEBOTHAM, 25/27, WIEND



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SKELMERSDALE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
1950.

Chairman J. W. SHUFFLEBOTHAM

Vice-Chairman W. J. FENNEY

Chairman of the Health Committee R. J. HUMPHREYS

F. ACKARY.

J. BIRCH.

W. J. BROWN.

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F. HALLIWELL.

T. MOSTON.

L. RAINFORD.

J. T. WAREING.

C. WELDING.

J. S. WILLIAMS.

**TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
HEALTH COMMITTEE**

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report on the Health of the District during 1950.

The general health of the District has remained good and the incidence of Infectious Disease has been negligible.

The results of Diphtheria Immunisation in Skelmersdale have been so satisfactory that there has been no case of the disease during the last five years, and no death during the last ten years. The level of Immunisation has fallen to 74% of the children under 15 whereas the figure was 80% last year. There should be no complacency since we will only keep up the splendid record of no cases of Diphtheria if the level of Immunisation remains high amongst the child population of Skelmersdale.

The housing problem is still an urgent one in the District. During the year 37 new houses were built, but many more are required before the people of Skelmersdale can be anything like adequately housed.

Finally, I should like to thank the Members of the Health Committee for their interest in matters of health, and the Members of the Staff for their help and co-operation.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant.

J. GORDON HAILWOOD.

September, 1951.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH:

J. GORDON HAILWOOD, M.D., Ch.B., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,
D.P.H. (Part-time).

(Divisional Medical Officer, Lancashire County Council)

Sanitary Inspector: NOEL BENSON, A.R.San.I., M.S.I.A.

Area of the District — 1,942 acres.

Resident Population (Registrar General's estimate at mid-1950):
6,100.

Number of inhabited houses, according to Rate Books, at end of
1950 — 1,885.

Rateable value — £23,100.

Sum represented by a penny rate — £85.

SUMMARY OF VITAL STATISTICS FOR 1950

Live Births

	Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	42	40	82
Illegitimate	2	—	2
Crude birth rate per 1,000 estimated population — 13.5.			
Adjusted birth rate per 1,000 estimated population — 13.3.			

Stillbirths	—	1	1
Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births — 12.0.			

Deaths	35	35	70
Crude death rate per 1,000 estimated population — 11.2.			
Adjusted death rate per 1,000 estimated population — 12.4.			

Deaths from Puerperal Causes:

Puerperal and Post-abortive Sepsis	—
Other maternal causes	—

Deaths of Infants under one year of age:

All infants per 1,000 live births	60
Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate live births ...	61
Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate live births ...	—
Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	8
„ „ Measles (all ages)	—
„ „ Whooping Cough (all ages)	—
„ „ Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	—

BIRTHS

There were 84 births recorded in the Urban District during the year, of which 44 were male and 40 female; and including 2 illegitimate female births. The crude birth rate was 13.5 per 1,000 population. The adjusted birth rate per 1,000 population (mid 1950) (comparability factor 0.99) was 13.3 compared with 18.5 in 1949.

The number of births shewed a fall of 29 births compared with 1949, a decrease of 5.2

DEATHS

The total number of deaths registered in the Urban District during the year number 70, of this number 35 were male and 35 female. This was an increase of one on the figure for 1949. The crude death rate for the year was 11.2 compared with 11.3 in 1949, a decrease of 0.1. The adjusted death rate (comparability factor 1.11) was 12.6 per 1,000 population.

INFANTILE MORTALITY

There were no deaths during the year due to Zymotic and Epidemic diseases.

There were 5 deaths of infants under one year, giving an infantile mortality rate of 60 per 1,000 live births.

CAUSES OF DEATH IN THE SKELMERSDALE URBAN DISTRICT 1950

Causes of Death	Male	Female
Tuberculosis of the respiratory system	1	—
Other forms of Tuberculosis	—	—
Syphilitic disease	—	—
Diphtheria	—	—
Whooping Cough	—	—
Meningococcal infections	—	—
Acute Polimyelitis	—	—
Measles	—	—
Other infective and parasitic diseases	—	—
Cancer	1	2
Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasm	2	—
Leukaemia, aleukaemia	—	—
Diabetes	—	—
Vascular lesions of nervous system	3	5
Heart Diseases	14	16
Other circulatory disease	1	—
Influenza	1	3
Pneumonia	3	2
Bronchitis	5	—
Other diseases of respiratory system	1	—
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	1	—
Gastritis, enteritis and diarrhoea	—	—
Nephritis and nephrosis	—	—
Hyperplasia of prostate	—	—
Pregnancy, childbirth, abortion	—	—
Congenital malformations	1	—
Other defined and ill-defined diseases	—	7
Motor vehicle accidents	—	—
All other accidents	1	—
Suicide	—	—
Homicide and operations of war	—	—
TOTALS	35	35

Deaths of Infants under 1 Year:

	M.	F.
Legitimate	—	5
Illegitimate	—	—
	—	5

Still Births:

Legitimate	—	1
Illegitimate	—	—
	—	1

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICE FOR THE AREA

Laboratory Facilities

Pathological specimens of a simple nature, throat swabs, etc., are sent for examination at the E.M.S. Pathological Laboratory at the Ormskirk County Hospital. All other specimens are sent to the City Laboratories, Liverpool.

Ambulance Facilities

Ambulance Services are provided by the County Council under the National Health Service Act 1946.

Clinics and Treatment Centres

The Congregational Schoolroom in Whitham Road is utilised every Wednesday morning as a Child Welfare Centre and Minor Ailments Clinic, under the direction of Dr. Robertson Wilson and Nurse Bodley of the Lancashire County Council.

An Immunisation Clinic is held one Wednesday afternoon in each month at 2-15 on the same premises by Dr. Robertson Wilson.

Hospitals

There are no hospitals in the town.

The Ormskirk County Hospital and the Wigan Hospitals provide ample accommodation for all patients from Skelmersdale.

Infectious cases are admitted to the New Hall Isolation Hospital, Scarisbrick.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

Water Supply

The supply of water in the district continues to be, on the whole, satisfactory in quality and quantity, excepting the East Boundary, where the pressure is low owing to the higher elevation.

The whole of the district is supplied with water by the Southport and District Water Board from a deep well situated at Scarth Hill in the Parish of Lathom.

Sewage Disposal

The district is sewered on the partly separate system. The sewage from approximately 1,484 houses in the principal housing area is discharged by gravity through a 24 inch outfall sewer at the Council's Berry Street Disposal Works, and that from 255 houses by a 15 inch outfall sewer at their Penny Lane Works.

The sewage at both works is treated by settlement and land irrigation and periodical cleansing and repairs are carried out. The Skelmersdale and Upholland Joint Sewerage Scheme, planned to improve the sewage disposal and provide for additional property is now estimated to cost £140,000.

Closest Accommodation

Privy Middens — 83. Number of closets attached to these middens — 117. Number of pail closets — 29.

Number of dry ashpits (excluding middens) — Nil.

Number of moveable ashbins — 1,768.

Number of houses on water carriage system — 1,739.

HOUSING

Number of New Houses Erected during the Year:—

(a)	Total (including numbers given under (b) :—	
(i)	By the Local Authority	35
(ii)	By other Local Authorities	—
(iii)	By other bodies and persons	2
(b)	With State assistance under the Housing Acts	
(i)	By the Local Authority	—
(ii)	By other bodies or persons	—

1. Inspection of Dwelling Houses During the Year:—

(1)	(a)	Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts	790
	(b)	Number of inspections made for the purpose	1,754
(2)	(a)	Number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under Housing Consolidated Regulations 1925 and 1932 ...	—
	(b)	Number of inspections made for the purpose	—
(3)		Number of dwelling houses found to be unfit for human habitation	40
(4)		Number of dwelling houses found not reasonably fit for human habitation	295
		Number of nuisances discovered	576
		Number of nuisances abated	542

2. Remedy of Defects during the year without Service of Formal Notice:—

Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action, by the Local Authority or their Officers

276

3. Action under Statutory Powers during the Year ...

4. Proceedings under Sections 11 and 13 of the Housing Act, 1936:—

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made

11

(2) Number of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders

4

INFECTIOUS DISEASES STATISTICS.

[illegible]

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR 1950

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES	TOTAL CASES NOTIFIED													Total Deaths	Hospital	
	Total Cases at all Ages	YEARS													Total Cases removed to Hospital	Deaths in Hospital of persons belonging to district
		Under 1 year	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-35	35-45	45-65	65 & upwards			
Scarlet Fever	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Diphtheria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Enteric Fever	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Measles	12	—	2	3	2	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Whooping Cough ...	11	1	2	1	—	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Acute Pneumonia ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	5	
Meningococcal Infection	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	—	—	—	—	4	—	
Ophthalmia Neonotorum	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1	
Non-Pulmonary Tuberculosis	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Acute Poliomyelitis ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Erysipelas	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
TOTALS	30	1	—	4	4	2	13	—	1	4	1	9	6	9	6	

The following table shows the Number, Monthly distribution and Nature of Cases of Infectious Diseases coming under the notice of the Medical Officer of Health during 1950—

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Totals	Removed to Hospital
Anthrax	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Smallpox	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scarlet Fever	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
Diphtheria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enteric Fever	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Acute Primary and Acute Influenzal Pneumonia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Puerperal Pyrexia	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	4	4
Acute Poliomyelitis	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Meningococcal Infection	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cerebro-Spinal Fever	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Malaria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dysentery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Measles	—	1	1	2	6	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	—
Whooping Cough	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	7	3	—	11	—
Erysipelas	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	—	3	2	2	6	2	—	1	—	7	5	1	29	5

DIPHTHERIA IMMUNISATION

Total number of children who have completed a full course of Immunisation up to and including 31st December, 1950:—

	Age Groups		Total under
	0—4 years	5—14 years	15 years
Total Population in Age Groups	526	936	1462
Total Number Immunised ...	325	770	1095
Percentage	61.7%	82.2%	74.8%

Table showing Incidence and Mortality from Diphtheria, 1940-1950

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950
Cases ...	—	1	4	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Deaths ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

SCARLET FEVER

Table showing Incidence and Mortality from Scarlet Fever, 1940-50

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950
Cases ...	—	4	4	5	10	8	5	6	5	—	1
Deaths ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Influenza and other Respiratory Diseases

There were four deaths from Influenza during the year. Five deaths were recorded due to Pneumonia.

TUBERCULOSIS

New Cases and Mortality during 1950

Age Periods			NEW CASES				DEATHS			
			Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
			M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Years										
0—1	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
0—5	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5—10	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10—15	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15—20	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
20—25	...	...	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
25—35	...	...	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35—45	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
45—55	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
55—65	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and upwards	...	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS			1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
			1		—		1		—	

Notifications on Form 1 by Medical Officers of Hospitals

				Public Assistance and General and Military Hospitals	Sanatoria and Pulmonary Hospitals
PULMONARY—					
Males	—	—
Females	—	—
NON-PULMONARY—					
Males	—	—
Females	—	—

Dispensary and sanatorium treatment for Tuberculosis is administered by the appropriate department of the Lancashire County Council.

THE FOLLOWING REPORT HAS BEEN MADE BY THE SANITARY INSPECTOR, MR. BENSON

There appears to be an ever widening gap between modern requirements and the existing low standards of the older type house. The progress of improvements hoped for in the repair or demolition of insanitary property has been retarded. Shortages of materials and inflated costs have deterred owners from undertaking anything but essential repairs. This has involved continued re-inspections, the issue of many letters and notices, appeals and interviews. During the year five houses were demolished and demolition orders put into operation on eleven other premises.

The various decisions of the Courts regarding the provision of dustbins by "owner" or "occupier" has done nothing to clarify the position, and until some definite lead is given, or a "Council Bin Scheme" adopted, much time and money will be wasted.

With the growing importance of home food production, there has been during the year an alarming increase in the number of "small" pig keepers. The absence of bye-laws covering the keeping of pigs makes control of these premises not as complete as could be desired. Particular attention has been necessary during the fly breeding season when manure is apt to accumulate and its removal delayed, because either the farmer is too busy to have it removed, or it is not immediately required.

Applications for the registration of premises to sell wrapped ice-cream have increased. A problem has been raised for retailers by the effects of "Electricity Cuts," which often result in the temperature of the ice-cream in the refrigerators rising above 28° F. which is the maximum temperature permitted by the Regulations. If this temperature is exceeded further heat treatment with subsequent freezing is necessary before sale.

Improvements to the sanitary arrangements at schools in the district have not yet materialised nor have any substantial improvements been made to Licensed Premises apart from painting and decoration of rooms. In some cases owners of public houses are agreeable to carry out extensive works of improvement to their premises but have been unable to obtain the necessary licences from the Ministry of Works.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD SUPPLIES

Milk

Nearly 75% of milk sold in the district is either pasteurised or tuberculin tested. There are now only five dairymen retailing milk in the district apart from twelve shopkeepers holding licences

for the sale of sterilised milk in sealed bottles.

Three samples were taken and tested for the presence of tubercle bacilli all of which proved "negative".

Nine samples were taken and tested by the "Methylene Blue" or Phosphate Test, seven were found to be satisfactory.

Ice Cream

Ice cream is not now manufactured in the district, but eleven premises are registered for the retailing of well known varieties.

Twenty-one samples were taken and submitted for bacteriological examinations. The following results were obtained:—

No. of Samples	Grade
7	1
10	2
2	3
2	4

It is interesting to note that of the four samples showing grades 3 and 4, three were taken following an "Electricity Cut," the remaining sample graded as 4 was due to a refrigerator breakdown.

Ice cream which consistently fails to reach grades one and two may be regarded as unsatisfactory.

Bakehouses

There are seven small bakehouses in the district mostly employing only one or two persons. Routine inspections were made and the limewashing of walls and ceilings carried out regularly. As so much depends on personal cleanliness in this work, attention was directed towards the need for clean hands, clothing and clean habits.

Factory and School Canteens

Frequent inspections are made of factory and school canteens and a very high standard of cleanliness is maintained. Most of the canteens have modern hygienic equipment both for cooking where this is done, and for the washing up process. Nearly 1,000 meals are served daily in these premises.

Adulteration of Food

The following samples were taken by the Lancashire County Council who are responsible for sections of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938/50, dealing with adulteration of food.

Tea	4	Ground Almonds	1
Baking Powder	3	Candied Peel	1
Golden Raising Powder	1	Barley	1
Vegetables—canned ...	4	Sage & Onion Stuffing	1
Butter	1	Raisins	1
Margarine	1	Table Salt	1
Cooking Fat	1	Ice Cream	1

All the above samples were certified by the County Analyst to be genuine.

Unsound Food

Articles of food were inspected and the following were found to be unfit for human consumption, these were voluntarily surrendered:—

Food	No. of Tins	Weight	Reason for condemnation
Apples	8	8lbs.	Tins blown.
Beans	2	2lbs.	Tins blown.
Brawn	2	1lb.	Tins blown.
Clensette		130lbs.	Insect infestation.
Coconut	1	1lb.	Blown.
Farinoca		21lbs.	Insect infestation.
Ham		14½lbs.	Decomposition & bone taint.
Meat	5	7lbs.	Blown.
Milk (Evap.)	79	79lbs.	Blown.
Oatmeal		140lbs.	Contaminated by oil.
Peas	11	11lbs.	Blown.
Pears	2	5lbs.	Blown.
Pilchards	3	2lbs.	Blown.
Pork	1	1lb.	Blown.
Plums	1	1lb.	Blown.
Salmon	2	2lbs.	Blown.
Sayghetti		56lbs.	Insect infestation.
Sausages		14lbs.	Decomposition.

Whenever possible, condemned food was used for animal feeding or inedible purposes, the remainder being destroyed.

Rodent Control

Premises in the district where rodent infestation was reported or discovered were treated. The methods used for control were those recommended by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The sewers received two treatments, in the first place Zinc Phosphide and Sausage Rusk was used and for the second treatment Arsenic and Bread Mash. Refuse tips and sewage disposal works were also baited, the number of bait "takes" proved to be very small. Routine investigation and treatment was carried out by the part-time rodent operator.

Refuse and Salvage Collection

The removal of house and shop refuse is carried out by the Council's staff under the direction of the Sanitary Inspector. The service is operated by one vehicle a "Ford Thames," with a team of five men including the driver, who also assists in loading. Bins are emptied weekly and privy middens as often as possible with the existing staff. Disposal of refuse is by semi-crude tipping on private land subject to flooding on the south eastern boundary of the district. This method of disposal cannot be regarded as entirely satisfactory, although when available, suitable covering material is used.

During the early part of the year owing to unforeseen circumstances an emergency tip had to be used consisting of a disused stone quarry containing a considerable quantity of water. The risk of fire, a danger to all tips, appeared by using the quarry to be at a minimum. A fire did however occur, which necessitated prompt action by the Lancashire County Fire Brigade. The Council also took immediate action by dumping loads of sand to seal the surface in order to reduce the annoyance from smoke to the half dozen houses in the vicinity.

Salvage

The collection of waste paper was discontinued during most of the year because of the low price offered by the Mills, and the difficulties in disposal when collected. Towards the end of the year signs of a renewed demand appeared and the price offered increased. Collection was again resumed, but during the year, only 6 tons was collected and baled.

It is now apparent that the collection of waste paper will be extremely profitable and the services has been organised to encourage salvage.

Shops

There are 110 shops on the register and each was visited at least twice during the year. They are mostly combined house and shop type.

In a few of the larger shops where assistants are employed, it was necessary to draw the management's attention to the inadequacy of the heating arrangements. The deficiency was generally remedied without further action and a reasonable temperature was maintained during the cold weather. All shops have sanitary accommodation on the premises or in a few cases within easy access.

Insect Disinfestation

Twelve premises were treated for bug infestation by hand spraying of 5% D.D.T. Solution. In the treatment of cockroach infestation the most effective remedy proved to be a proprietary brand of powder of the pyrethrium type.

There was some evidence of the activities of the "furniture beetle" in many houses, where the new flightholes were conspicuous in the floor boards. Several complaints were made by tenants of the new Council houses of bug infestations which proved upon investigation to be the harmless "plaster beetle." No action was necessary as generally after a few days of the drying effects of occupation, the insects were not seen again.

Schools

The four schools in the area were inspected at frequent intervals and the sanitary fitments examined. Minor repairs to the sanitary conveniences were carried out upon notification to the Divisional Education Office.

The trough closets which are in use at two schools are flushed periodically by an automatic flushing tank. This can be adjusted to flush at varying intervals. It was found that the interval between flushes had been prolonged in order to reduce consumption of water which for these premises is on meter. This particular form of economy not only causes considerable offence by the excreta lying for long periods in the trough but is the frequent cause of stoppage in drains. The trough closet is in itself a bad object lesson for the children apart from other factors and it is hoped that individual flushing cisterns will soon be fitted.

SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE SANITARY INSPECTOR

Complaints received and investigated	335
Number of dwelling houses inspected under the Public Health Act	732
Number of dwellings inspected under the Housing Acts	58
Number of re-visits to premises	964
Visits to factories and workplaces	29
Visits to bakehouses and food premises	74
Visits to dairies and milk shops	20
Visits to schools	26
Visits to licensed premises	10
Visits to shops	248
Visits re rodent control	110
Visits to piggeries	31
Interviews with owners, agents and contractors	93
Miscellaneous sanitary visits	81
Visits re milk tubercle bacilli and methylene blue test	10
Visits re ice cream sampling	34
Number of preliminary notices served	295
Number of preliminary notices complied with	280
Number of statutory notices served	15
Number of statutory notices complied with	18

